

Turning to the arts

By Chris Evans

THE dilapidated former Victorian Railways electrical substation in Market Street, Newport, will be opened to the public for a rare inspection on Sunday week.

Organised by the Hobsons Bay Community Arts Initiative — which has been granted \$80,000 by the State Government and \$20,000 from Hobsons Bay Council — the open day will be the public's last chance to view the building before it is turned into a landmark arts facility.

The building will be open from noon to 2pm in the presence of Hobsons Bay mayor Brad Matheson and Terri Bracks, wife of the Premier and MP for Williamstown Steve Bracks.

Cr Matheson, in whose Hall Ward the building stands, said the likelihood that something might at last be going to happen had been a source of "great pleasure" to him as a serving councillor.

"Mr Darren Williams and Mr Nigel Edwards, who set up the Hobsons Bay Community Arts Initiative and organised the open day, are the kind of community-minded citizens which make the municipality a wonderful place in which to live and work," Cr Matheson said.

"For more years than I can remember, the New-

port substation has been a blight on the local landscape.

"These two great men have worked tirelessly to secure funding and support for an initial clean-up of the building's interior, which will probably set the scene for its transformation into an arts venue which everyone in this district is going to be proud of."

Cr Matheson said that in addition to the \$20,000 granted by Hobsons Bay council, a further \$20,000 worth of help had been promised by local commerce and industry.

However, he said the Victoria University of Technology was the major driver of the present work on the site as it controlled an \$80,000 training grant to give up to 53 unemployed the opportunity to gain work experience on the project.

"This is, quite simply a great community initiative which will result in the delivery of a fantastic asset to the people of this city in general and its arts community in particular," he said.

At the request of The Advertiser, Cr Matheson last week travelled to North Fitzroy and Albion to inspect two other almost identical buildings which — as has been proposed for Newport — have successfully been put to visionary new uses.



Big project: Steve Bracks wants to see as many Hobsons Bay residents as possible at the old substation next week.

Pictures: Tanya Wilson



Grime time: Victoria University work trainees are having to sweep and mop floors not cleaned for 50 years.



Endless possibilities: Brad Matheson in the rundown substation in Market Street, Newport.

North Fitzroy is the site of the Casa Edda Vaccari hostel for the aged completed in 1992 and Albion is the site of the Maltese Cultural Centre, completed less than two years later.